

### **Constraints/Issues/Negatives**

#### **Overall:**

- The perception of public safety affects the quality of life and image of the community.
- The tax system impacts redevelopment and affects the ability of owners to maintain their properties.
- Flooding is a problem in some areas of the City, including in areas that are low-lying, are in the floodplain, or have inadequate drainage.

#### **Physical Conditions:**

- Code enforcement is an on-going challenge for the City, although City officials report that they are working on updating the code and enhancing enforcement efforts.
- Outdoor storage of materials, littering, a general lack of property maintenance, and illegal dumping affect many highly visible properties, roadsides, and entry points.
- Vacant lots detract from the City's image and vitality.
- Although the convention center and baseball stadium are only three blocks apart, there is no apparent visual/streetscape connection between the two areas.
- Many commercial areas do not have consistent streetlights, street furniture, street trees, and other streetscape amenities.

#### **Residential:**

- Much of the housing stock consists of older, wood-frame homes that require a high level of maintenance. Some owners, including the large number of seniors in the City, struggle to maintain their properties.
- Many residential structures are vacant and the City has demolished a large number of homes.
- Some multi-family complexes are located in isolated locations far from shopping and employment opportunities.
- Some large multi-family housing developments are vacant, in poor condition, or deteriorating.

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### **Commercial:**

- Several long corridors are zoned primarily for commercial use. This may hinder the development of a “critical mass” of activity.
- Commercial districts suffer from vacant properties, poorly-maintained facades, a limited range of shops and services, a lack of landscaping, and excessive parking lots and curb cuts.
- Several commercial areas lack consistent, attractive streetscapes.

### **Institutional:**

- The public perception of the school district is poor, hindering residential growth.
- A continued decline in student numbers will have negative impacts on school funding.
- Several schools have closed in recent years. This has left vacant buildings in several neighborhoods.
- The City’s full-service hospital, Methodist Hospital’s Northlake Campus, has experienced financial difficulties.

### **Industrial:**

- Some industrial sites are within neighborhoods and directly adjacent to residential uses. This has negative impacts on adjacent residential uses due to truck traffic, noise, and/or views.
- Some industrial uses lack buffers, screening, and landscaping, especially from high-visibility locations or when adjacent to residential uses.
- Some industrial parcels are vacant or underutilized.
- Some of Gary’s industrial land is or may be contaminated, complicating development or redevelopment efforts.

### **Parks & Open Space:**

- Parks are not all well-maintained. Staff is not available and/or not trained sufficiently to maintain parks and specialty areas such as pools, ball fields, and courts.
- Much of the park signage appears dated or is non-existent in some parks.
- Many parks scattered throughout the City make maintenance efforts a less efficient use of the City’s resources.
- Many of the parks are under-utilized.

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- Barbed wire fencing and out-of-date equipment create safety concerns.
- Views and access to the City's rivers are limited in some locations

### **Natural Resources:**

- Although Gary has numerous natural areas with dunes, swales, wetlands, and woodlands, many are disconnected and not every neighborhood has good access to natural areas.

### **Historic Preservation:**

- The Preservation Ordinance and Preservation Commission have yet to be put in place. Therefore, historic properties are not being protected.
- The City needs an updated, city-wide historic resources survey and designated local landmarks.
- Vacant historic properties are not properly stabilized, leading to demolition.
- Building owners (both private and public) need to be informed about the historic and cultural importance of their buildings and about the state and federal incentives that are available for repair and maintenance of historic properties.

### **Zoning:**

- The current zoning code does not include landscape requirements.
- Residents and business owners reported that the current building code does not allow for "green building" techniques.
- Aspects of the ordinance, including F.A.R. requirements, setback requirements, and allowed uses, are complicated and confusing.
- Although most zoning districts are well-placed, there are a number of locations where current zoning encourages land use conflicts. For example, B5 districts in Downtown West and M1 districts in University Park are directly adjacent to residential districts.
- There may be more land zoned commercially than necessary to meet market demand, which may result in vacant or underutilized properties or commercial uses dispersed throughout the City without clusters or a proper concentration to form a "critical mass" of activity.
- For commercial districts, front- and side-yard requirements are not specified, which could result in inappropriate suburban-style retail development in urban areas.

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### **Transportation:**

- The multiple one-way streets will need to be reviewed for optimization of access during the redevelopment in the Downtown Business District and Stadium Districts. Many intersections along U.S. 12 (4<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and U.S. 20 (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue) have drainage issues that need to be addressed.
- Access to the Miller area, including Marquette Park, is a concern. The area only has three roadways connecting it to Gary: Lake Street, Grand Boulevard via Old Hobart Road, and County Line Road. There are two very active rail lines running east-west through this area, causing traffic congestion: the South Shore passenger rail and the B&O.
- In an effort to decrease the numerous at-grade crossings with railroads, the City of Gary street network was developed with many streets dead-ending before rail lines. This is especially evident in the Stadium District and the Downtown Business District.
- Heavy, fast-moving traffic, including truck traffic, is negatively impacting roadways and streets in some locations, including 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and some truck routes through neighborhoods.
- Access to Buffington Harbor casinos is difficult and lacks direct access from a Cline Avenue interchange.

### **Economic Development:**

- Property tax issues and negative perceptions about City schools may hinder the City's ability to attract new industry/jobs.

### **Opportunities/Strengths/Positives**

#### **Overall:**

- Gary has a strategic location in the Midwest, resting along major national highway and rail routes, adjacent to a growing commuter airport and a lake port, and close to the City of Chicago and other Northwest Indiana urban centers.
- Lake Michigan is an important amenity for industrial, recreational, and aesthetic reasons.
- Improvements by the Gary Sanitation Department and the Army Corps of Engineers, as well as more appropriate development in flood-prone areas, is reducing the impacts of flooding.

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### **Physical Conditions:**

- The gateway area, including the two domed civic buildings and open spaces along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and around the convention center, are well-maintained and present a positive gateway image for the City.
- Rehabilitation plans for Downtown Gary buildings, including the former Sheraton Hotel, will improve the vibrancy and “look” of the Downtown area.
- The City has developed several partnerships to improve its appearance and upkeep, including one with the Keep America Beautiful campaign.
- The City has worked with the State to rehabilitate streetscape elements and sidewalks along Grant Street.

### **Residential:**

- The housing stock is in good condition in large areas of the City.
- The City has a good mix of housing products that include single-family, duplexes, rowhouses/townhouses, and multi-family developments.
- The City has a demolition program instituted to remove unsafe, deteriorated buildings.
- The City is emphasizing code enforcement on deteriorating properties.
- The community has more affordable housing than other communities in the Chicago metropolitan region.
- Recent residential developments, including HOPE VI mixed-income development, have filled in vacant blocks with attractive, new residential units.

### **Commercial:**

- Some commercial locations, such as the Lake Street commercial corridor in Miller, the Village Shopping Center, and the Tri-City Plaza Shopping Center, provide shopping for Gary residents.
- Gary Lakefront casinos and the hotel attract numerous visitors to the City and may spark further redevelopment in the northwest corner of the City.
- Land is available for commercial development.
- Although vacant lots and storefronts are common on commercial corridors, pockets of vibrant uses can provide “building blocks” for successful retail nodes.

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- The City or other government agencies control or will control many parcels Downtown, which could make a master redevelopment easier than if the parcels were owned by numerous private owners.
- Lake Street and Miller Beach in the Miller neighborhood are vibrant, “Main Street”-style shopping districts.
- Broadway and Ridge Road in University Park may be able to further build off of nearby educational institutions by attracting students and faculty.

### **Institutional:**

- Indiana University Northwest and Ivy Tech College provide valuable education and training to Gary residents and the entire region.
- The two Methodist Hospitals campuses provide essential medical care for Gary residents and Methodist has expansion plans at the Midlake Campus on 25th Street.
- Gary Civic Symphony, arts groups, and other cultural entities are anchors for the community and can play a role in redevelopment.
- Most of Gary’s municipal departments are located within a few blocks of each other in Downtown or the Central (Midtown) neighborhood. Some key institutional functions, such as libraries, post offices, and fire stations, are located strategically around the City.

### **Industrial:**

- The City has several large employers that provide jobs and contribute to the tax base including U.S. Steel.
- Vacant or underutilized industrial properties near the airport provide opportunities for development.
- There are several state and federal programs designed to assist in the remediation of contaminated properties, including RCRA, Superfund, the Voluntary Remediation Program, and the Brownfields Program.

### **Parks & Open Space:**

- There is a large amount of park space and natural resources.
- Parks create structure and act as an identifying feature for surrounding communities.
- The 2005 Green Link Master Plan creates opportunities for connections.
- Opportunities exist to generate revenue by hosting special events or charging fees for facilities.

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- There are a variety of uses/activities throughout the parks.
- Hosting festivals in the parks could increase usage.
- Opportunities exist to consolidate park land to help facilitate maintenance.
- The Parks Department is willing to be more active in the day-to-day maintenance of the City's parks, but they require manpower, funding, and restructuring to give them the power to do so.
- Some of Gary's parks are host to undisturbed ecosystems.
- Gateway Park is in a highly visible location to act as a gateway and identifier for the City.
- Some areas along the City's rivers, including Ambridge Park, provide an opportunity for greater community access to the waterfront. Such areas include overlooks and paths.
- Natural areas/corridors in the City could be linked to provide a "green" character and corridors for wildlife and multi-use trails.

### **Natural Resources:**

- There are environmental/recreational-corridor-related opportunities as noted in the Gary Green Link Plan.
- There are opportunities for the Lakeshore redevelopment as noted in the Marquette Reinvestment Study.
- Opportunities exist for biodiversity retention and enhancement to create connections between high quality natural areas via environmental corridors.
- Opportunities exist to develop environmental tourism within high quality natural areas.
- The presence of state- and federally-protected species within City limits offers opportunities for strengthening the City's natural and environmental profile.
- Opportunities exist for brownfield redevelopment.

### **Historic Preservation:**

- Grants, tax incentives, and loans are available for the restoration and maintenance of historic properties on a state and local level.
- Gary has two historic districts and eight properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- There is a wealth of historically and culturally significant properties in the City of Gary that are eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, making them available for federal funding.

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- There are many existing resources available on historic and culturally significant properties in the City of Gary.

### **Zoning:**

- Residential districts are generally appropriate in terms of size and placement.

### **Transportation:**

- Currently, U.S. 12 (4<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and U.S. 20 (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue) are one-ways in a section of the City. Changing the streets to two-way traffic would increase the opportunity for redevelopment along the roadways and, in rerouting truck traffic, air quality would improve.
- Recently, U.S. 12 (from the portion under the Indiana Toll Road to the west) was in the process of being turned over to the City of Gary but the transfer was not completed.
- Overall, the street network in University Park is in good condition, with the exception of Chase Street, which is in very poor condition. Total reconstruction of this roadway is recommended.
- The Downtown and Stadium Districts' street networks are in fair to good condition. There are numerous one-way streets that may need to be changed to two-way in some locations.
- The Westside Development District has good roadway access. The interchange with Cline Avenue is in poor condition. 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Chase Street will require reconstruction in areas.
- The Lakefront Reclamation and Development District access exists as Buffington Harbor Drive. Its interchange with Cline Avenue will need to be modified to provide better access for northbound Cline Avenue toward the lakefront. Other access points to this area will be needed for redevelopment.
- Possible future plans for the trolley service involve expanding to the Miller area to complement a Navy-Pier-like development.
- The Gary Public Transportation Corporation is working with the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) Regional Bus Authority to develop plans to provide seamless transit throughout Northwest Indiana. Currently the surrounding communities do not have coordinating bus schedules and riders can experience long wait times at some bus stops.
- Amtrak has a passenger service with the CSX Railroad on several shared rail lines. There is no station in Gary so passengers must board at Chicago's Union Station.
- There are multiple at-grade railroad crossings in the City of Gary. At one time, the Four Cities Consortium (a collaboration between the mayors of East Chicago, Gary,



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Hammond, and Whiting) had proposed a plan to alleviate traffic congestion caused by these crossings by rerouting rail lines, but the \$3.5 million federal funding approved for this project in 2004 was revoked because it was not used within the allotted time frame. With the loss of this project, the railroad crossing issues in Gary must be readdressed. Options of installing overpasses, underpasses, or leaving at-grade will need further studies by Gary to provide the best traffic circulation.

- Offering a hovercraft ride on Lake Michigan from Gary to other lakeside attractions in Chicago, cities surrounding Gary, and in Michigan provides an opportunity for Lakeshore development.
- Buffington Harbor has a private breakwater with a lighthouse that could possibly be used as a tourist destination. The harbor has restaurants and hotels which support the casinos. Plans are in development for the construction of a residential, retail, and recreational complex on the site of the old cement company property that is now owned by the City of Gary.
- Although there are no passenger flights currently operating out of the airport, there are expectations of one starting operation in the near future.
- The Indiana National Guard has constructed a new armory at the airport and will base their Chicago area air operation there.
- There will be an opportunity for economic development in the area surrounding the airport to support the increase in businesses operating out of the airport as a result of the expansion project.
- The City has excellent transportation access, with several expressways and numerous interchanges throughout the City.
- The City's three South Shore Line stations provide direct access to cities all the way from Chicago to South Bend.
- Vacant or underutilized land near South Shore Line stations provides an opportunity for transit-oriented development such as additional housing and shops.

### **Economic Development:**

- The Gary/Chicago International Airport has a planned expansion that may bring more passenger and freight traffic to the facility, stimulating economic growth in the region. This could include additional business parks or related development near the airport in Gary.
- Gary is part of the larger Northwest Indiana "job shed" that has access to jobs in Chicago.
- Gary has excellent access to transportation networks such as several interstate highways, rail routes, and shipping via Lake Michigan.

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- The Genesis Convention Center and the City's minor league baseball stadium, along with associated restaurants, provide an entertainment/event draw that attracts visitors to Downtown Gary.





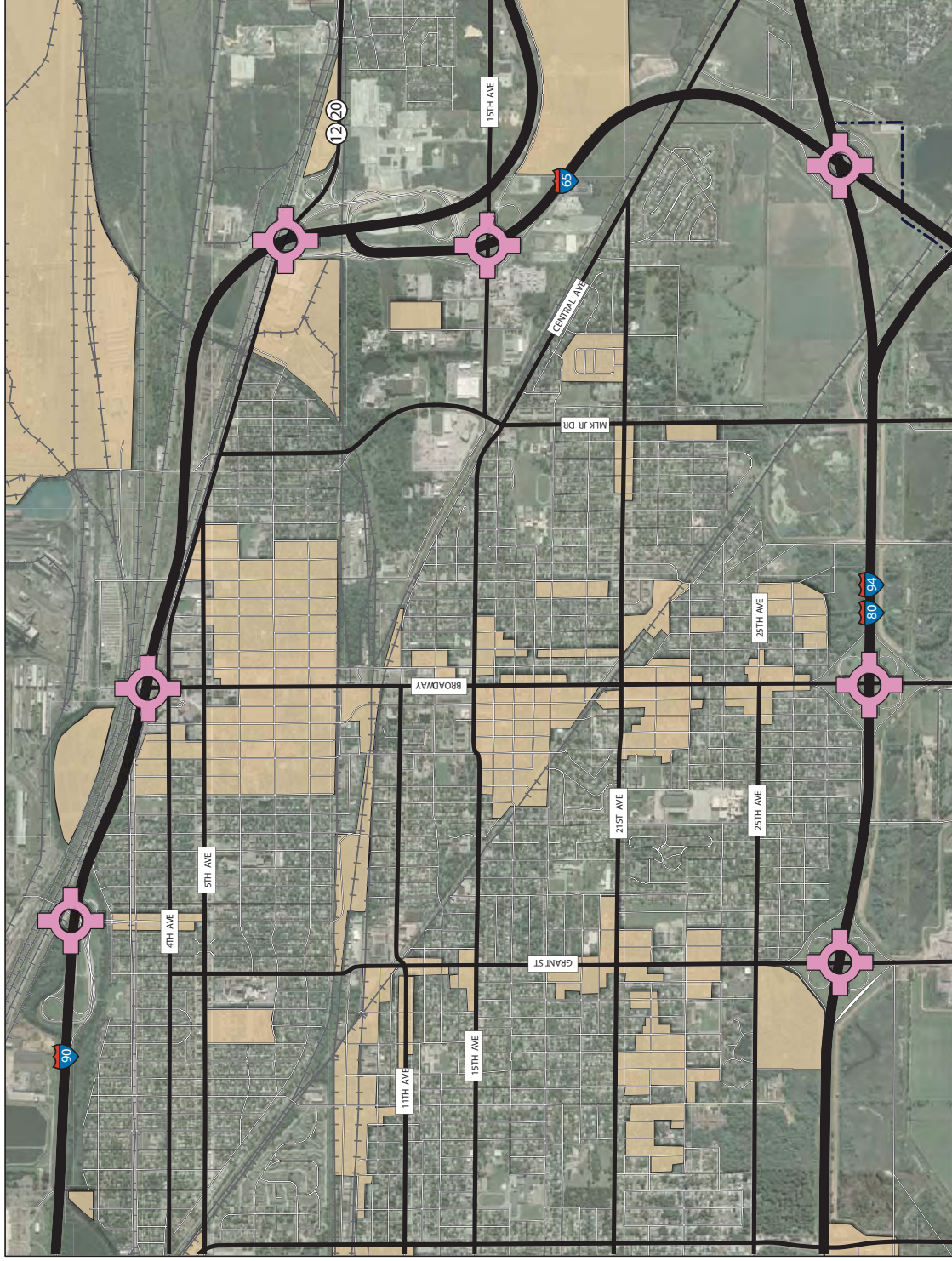


Figure 11.2: Central Area - Development Opportunities

Legend

- City Boundary
- Interstate
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Railroad
- Expressway
- Major Road
- Interchange
- Development/Redevelopment Opportunities

City of Gary, Indiana

Gary Comprehensive Plan

Figure 11.2: Central Area - Development Opportunities - DRAFT



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